DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 260 801 PS 015 268

AUTHOR King, Marian
TITLE Educating Children to Proper Eating Habits in the Classroom.
PUB DATE [83]
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavioral Objectives; *Eating Habits; *Food; *Grade 1; *Kindergarten Children; *Learning Activities; *Nutrition Instruction; Primary Education

ABSTRACT

A brief discussion of proper nutrition in general precedes an examination of proper nutrition for school children and the specification of nutrition education objectives for kindergarten or first grade students. The remainder of the paper delineates food projects by which objectives can be realized (for example, snack necklace, jack-o-lantern tortillas, cranberry turkeys, heart sandwiches, bunny salad, and vegetable kabobs. A referenct list is appended. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED260801

PS 015268

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Educating Children to Proper Eating Habits in the Classroom

by

Marian King

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marian J. King

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Educating Children
to Proper Eating Habits
in the Classroom

Introduction

The responsibility of developing good eating habits was in the past almost exclusively left to a specialized group of individuals commonly called "dieticians" who were mainly responsible for devising the proper diet for the sick, the undernourised and those on their way to recovery. During the last decade the importance of developing good eating habits has been popularized by newspaper and magazine articles and the mass media in general with the net result that society as a whole has become more aware of the relationship that exists between good eating habits and good personal health.

The Proper Nutrition

It is commonly assumed that an affluent nation has no nutritional problems. Unfortunately, a poor diet can and does coexist even in affluent societies. The foods consumed, such as candy, cake, soda, etc. are often very poor in nutritional value, thus creating a condition that has been appropriately called "over-consumption malnutrition." And malnutrition, no matter what form or shape it takes,

can and does affect a person's mental and physical health. (Charlton-Seifert, J. and Stratton, B. 1982)

Good nutrition and good health go hand-n-hand. We are becoming more and more aware of the connection between a healthy body and the quality of the food we eat, but we are also becoming increasingly aware of the effect that good or poor nutrition has on a person's brain. Brain cells need protein and vitamins to function properly. (Charlton-Seifert Stratton, B., and Williams, 1980)

Besides the problem of "over-consumption malnutrition", researchers are increasingly blaming sugar overloads for a variety of behavioral problems in children. (Smith, 1976) Hyperkinesis, for example, a behavioral disorder characterized by excessive physical activity and the inability to concentrate and learn, is attributed by Feingold to additives, preservatives and food colorings found in so many modern day food products. (Feingold, 1973)

Today the role of food in dental hygiene has also become an important issue. Dentists, for example, are recommending that snacks between meals be sugar free because the sugar in the food combines with mouth bacteria to produce an acid that dissolves tooth enamel, thus causing tooth decay. Modern day advertising, however, seems determined to keep promoting "junk-food" habits." 'Junk' refers to foods that are refined, sweetened or adulterated in ways that decrease fiber

content, freshness, and nutritional value and increase shelf life and commercial appeal." (Ilg., Ames, Baker 1981 p.295) Parents and teachers should be particularly concerned with T.V. ads which entice children to eat sugary cereals and snacks.

Proper Nutrition and School Children

According to Frankle (Frankle, 1980) when parents were asked, "What do you think is the biggest problem in building good eating habits in children?" they enumerated the following problem areas:

1. Parents as poor role models.
2. Snacks, high in calories - low in nutrition.
3. Television advertising to children.
4. Reluctance of children to try new foods.

Obviously, it is not the sole responsibility of the teacher to see to it that his/her students develop goodeating habits. But, a malnourished child or a child affected by hyperkinetic disorders can and does create problems in the classroom as well as in the family. It is not uncommon, therefore, that the teacher is called on to make use of the ready available audio-visual materials on good nutrition and on good eating habits for the benefit of his/ her students. But, more importantly. the teacher is also in an ideal position to

bring about changes in problem areas:

1. Through parent education.
2. By providing nutritional quality snacks, especially at classroom parties.
3. By helping children discern T.V. ads.
4. By providing children with the opportunity of trying new foods.

We develop our eating habits when we are very young and unless we are taught which are or are not good nutritional foods without knowing it we may fall into poor eating habits that we will indulge in throughout our lifetime. The classroom teacher can help even the youngest student develop good eating habits making him/her aware of the danger to physical and mental health caused by the so called "junk foods".

Even though pertinent information on the importance of good nutrition and its influence on learning, behavior, and health are routinely given today in almost every classroom, sometimes the students are exposed to a contradictory message in the classroom. Vegetables, fruits, nuts, etc. are stressed as good nutritional foods leading to good health and the students are justly alerted to the evils of sugar, additives, and food coloring. But, what are the students served when classroom parties are held?...cake-mix cupcakes, sugary cookies, jello, heavily sugar-laden punch!

Aware of this contradictory message, and keeping in mind the problem areas stated on building good eating habits in children, many teachers have developed some educational objectives for their classroom snacks and parties. Although the following educational objectives are primarily intended for children of Kindergarten and First Grade age, they can easily be adapted to higher grades. They stress first the use of foods which are nutritional, but are free of sugar, additives, and food colorings; and second the active participation of the students themselves in the food preparation activities. Following the objectives are some food projects that a Kindergarten class has made and has enjoyed eating.

Educational Objectives for Kindergarten or First Grade (Frankle, 1980)

1. To help each child begin to understand the relationship of food to his or her own body.

   To recognize that: a. food helps me grow
   b. food gives me energy for everything I do
   c. different foods have different jobs to do because of the nutrients they contain

2. To help each child develop a sense of excitment and adventure in learning about food.

   To discover that: a. I can learn about food with my senses by looking, feeling, tasting, smelling, listening.

b. Its fun to eat with others at home and at school.

c. I can prepare some foods myself and share them.

d. Foods come from plants and animals.

e. Many people are involved in different ways in providing foods.

3. To help each child begin to develop personal responsibility for food selection and to understand the probable consequences of his/her food choices.

a. I need to eat a variety of foods.

b. Eating the right amount of food will help me be the size I should be as I am growing up.

c. Trying new foods is fun.

d. What I chose to eat between meals is an important part of my daily eating habits.

Food Projects Implementing the Above Objectives.

"An excellent way to introduce nutrition in the classroom is to provide frequent food preparation activities. Cooking can be as simple as peeling an orange for a snack, or as complicated as baking yeast bread." (Herr, Morse, 1982)

<u>September</u>

Snack Necklace

Need:

Large needle

Heavy thread

raisins

cheerios

dried fruit

small pretzels

pitted olives

cheese cubes

etc.

What to do:

Use needle and thread to string on snacks.

Wear necklace on trip around school grounds.

Stop and eat!

"Adults emphasize the excitment and importance of holidays by providing sweet foods (candy, cookies, cakes). These foods will become associated with happy and special times in the minds of children. Equally delicious alternatives are pizzas and/or fresh fruit." (Herr, Morse 1982)

<u>October</u>

Jack-O-Lantern Tortillas

Need:

Electric skillet

Plastic knives

Tortillas

Butter (could make own)

What to do:

Cut face on tortilla

Warm on electric skillet

Spread on butter

And eat!

"Finicky eaters are helped by the example of children who enjoy their food." (Huggins, 1975)

November

Cranberry Turkeys

Need:

Cranberry Sauce (smooth)

Knife

Turkey Cooky cutter

What to do:

Slice cranberry sauce in rounds

Cut out turkey with cutter.

And eat!

"Food experiences can lead to endless ways of enriching lessons in science, math, language, sensory stimulation, social development and small muscle skills." (Huggins, 1975)

December

Rudolph to eat

Need:

Peanut Butter

Pretzel sticks

Raisins

Wreat Bread

What to do:

1. Cut sliced bread into a triangle.
2. Spread with peanut butter
3. Raisins = eyes
4. Pretzels = antlers
5. Cherry = nose.
6. And eat!

"Snacks can make a difference between a fair diet and a good diet. Therefore, a variety of protein rich foods with vitamins and minerals should be offered during snack time. The occasion should also be used as an opportunity for education about foods." (Huggins, 1975)

January

Candle Salad

Need:

banana

sliced pinapple

What to do:

Arrange banana and pineapple to look like a candle.

"Jack Be Nimble" and eat!

"Serving new or disliked foods in small amounts encourages progressive acceptance." (Huggins, 1975)

February

Heart Sandwiches

Need:

Whole wheat bread

Heart shaped cookie cutter

Peanut Butter (could make own)

Honey (if desired)

(Any other topping, such as tuna salad; egg salad; etc.)

What to do:

Cut out heart from bread with cutter.

Spread on peanut butter or???

And eat!

"Cooking is an excellent means for teaching nutrition and many other concepts because the children are directly involved in the activities. Not only is this the best learning method for young children but it also encourages them to try new foods if they have observed and assisted in the food preparation." (Herr, Morse 1982)

<u>March</u>

Shamrocks to eat

Need:

Green Bell Pepper

Avacado

Wheat Bread

knife

Shamrock cookie cutter

What to do:

Slice green bell pepper crosswise (shamrock shape)

Cut shamrock shape from bread with cutter

Spread on mashed avacado.

And eat!

"The Basic 4 Food Groups requires too many generalizations for the young child. (Example: eggs and meat are classified together.) A better classifaction for the young child is to have 10 catergories." (Herr, Morse 1982)

1. milk
2. meat
3. dried peas/beans
4. eggs
5. fruit
6. vegetables
7. breads
8. pastas
9. cereal, grains, seeds,
10. nuts

<u>April</u>

Bunny Salad

Need:

Half pear

Cottage cheese

Shredded carrots

Leaf lettuce

raisins

Almonds

Beet (small piece)

What to do:

Invert pear on lettuce leaf

Cottage cheese = tail

raisins = eyes

almonds = ears

beet = nose

surround with shredded carrot

And eat!

"Preparing food is a learning activity that directs itself not only to the goal of feeding children, but also to the emotions and attitudes surrounding food." (Maim, 1981)

May

Fruit Salad in Paper Bag

Need:

Small clean bag (allow child to decorate it)

Fruit sections: apples, bananas, strawberries, pineappple, etc.
coconut (if desired)

What to do:

Place all ingredients in bag and Shake.

And eat!

"Children often have little experience in helping prepare food." (Maxim, 1981)

June

Vegetable Kabobs

Need:

Various vegetables: raw peas; kernel of corn; garbanzos; tomatoe; zucchini; raw potatoe; etc. (cheese cubes)

Plastic straw or tooth picks

What to do:

Cut vegetables into 1" cubes if not already bite size.

Place on plastic straw or toothpick.

And eat!

Concluding Remarks

Room mothers/fathers are sometimes unaware of the problems that snacks laden with sugar, additives, and/or food coloring can cause to some of the children in the classroom. Even when they are aware, they find themselves often at a loss as to what to prepare for a classroom party. The teacher can suggest that a solution to this dilemma is that the party become a food preparing activity for the whole class. This provides the children an opportunity of a cooking experience using recipies that are free of sugar, additives and food coloring and the activity can make them eager to try and taste the results of their cooking labors.

Not all parents can afford the time or expense involved in providing a treat for the whole class; the children of those parents who did not participate often feel left out and even embarrased by the non-participation of their parents. As one child so hurtfully put it: "We went ahead and had the ice cream and cookies that had been decorated and baked by somebody else's mother. " (LiGuorian, 1983)
Let this not be a complaint heard in our classroom!

References

Adler, I. Food, John Day Company 1980

Ault, R., Kids Are Natural Cooks, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1980

Bowen, E., "Health, Safety, and Nutritional Requirements of Young Children" in Streets, D., Administering Day Care and Preschool Programs,Allyn & Bacon, Inc., Boston, 1982 129-161.

Charlton-Seifert, J., Stratton, B., & Williams, M. Sweet and Slow: Diet Can Affect Learning. Academic Therapy, November, 1980 16 2

Charlton-Seifert J., & Stratton, B. Nutrition Education: Suggestions for Success, Educational Horizons, Spring 1982 60 122-125

Feingold, B. Why Your Child Is Hyperactive, Random House, N.Y. 1974

Frankle, Reva, "It's Never Too Early For Nutrition Education" Journal of School Health Sept. 1980 387-391

Herr, J. & Morse W., Food for thought: Nutrition Education for Young Children, Young Children, November, 1982 3-11

Huggins, Joyce, Nutrition and Young Children, CSUF School of Education Fresno, California 1975

Ilg, F., Ames,L., Baker,S. Behavioral Illnes, Child Behavior Barnes & Nobles Books, N.Y. 1981 285-297

Lamme, A., & Lamme L., Children's Food Preferences Journal of School Health, Sept. 1980 397+

Maxim, G., The Very Young Wadsworth Publishing Co. Belmont, Calif. 1980

References (Continued)

Maxim, George, The Sourcebook, Wadworth Publishing Co.
Belmont, Calif. 1981

O'Shea, Helene "Once Upon a Valentine", Ligourian Feb. 1983 53-58

Smith, Lendon, Improving Your Child's Behavior Chemistry
Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1976

Smith, Lendon, Foods For Healthy Kids McGraw-Hill Co. N.Y. 1981

Stronch, David R., Blame Diet for Learning Problems.
The American Biology Teacher, May, 1980 42 306-7

Wunderlich, Ray, Nutrition and Learning
Academic Therapy, January, 1981 16 303-7